

The concerns expressed are being addressed, and that is we expect our troops to have the best possible equipment. And if I were a soldier overseas wanting to defend my country, I'd want to ask the Secretary of Defense the same question, and that is, "Are we getting the best we can get us?" And they deserve the best. And I have told many families I met with, "We're doing everything we possibly can to protect your loved ones in a mission which is vital and important." And that mission is to spread freedom and peace. And I want to thank all the troops who will be spending their Christmas season overseas, away from their families, for their sacrifice, and I want to thank the families once again for the sacrifices they have made as well.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Social Security Reform

Q. The transition to personal accounts may cost \$2 trillion. Can the country afford to borrow that much?

The President. I think what's really important in the discussions is to understand the size of the problem. And that is we are faced with a present value of unfunded liabilities of about \$11 trillion. What's important, Steve, is, before we begin any discussion, is to understand the scope of the problem. And that's why these trustees are vital in helping educate the American people and Congress as to the size of the problem. And I will not prejudge any solution. I think it's very important for the first step to be a common understanding of the size of the problem and then for Members of both parties, in both bodies, to come together, to come and listen to the options available.

We have got a member of what was called the Moynihan Commission with us. They studied this problem in detail. They made some suggestions about how to move forward in solving the problem. Much of my thinking has been colored by the work of the late Senator Moynihan and the other members of the Commission who took a lot of time to take a look at this problem and who came up with some creative suggestions.

And so I look forward to working with Congress to address this issue in a straightforward manner.

Thank you all.

Payroll Taxes

Q. Are you against any withholding tax increase to pay for the transition, sir? Are you against—

The President. We will not raise payroll taxes to solve this problem.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:28 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security.

Remarks on Lighting the Hanukkah Menorah

December 9, 2004

Welcome, everybody, to the White House. Hanukkah is a festive holiday that celebrates a great victory for freedom. We remember the liberation of Jerusalem and a miracle witnessed in the holy temple 2,000 years ago. For 8 days the oil burned, and the light of freedom still burns in Jewish homes and synagogues everywhere.

We are honored to celebrate the miracle of Hanukkah in the White House this evening. We have a beautiful menorah from the Boca Raton Synagogue in Boca Raton, Florida. Laura and I are grateful to have it here, and we thank Rabbi Kenneth Brander for making that possible.

I also thank the gentlemen from Kol Zimra, who will help us say the blessings over the candles and bless all of us with their music. Welcome.

The Talmud teaches that the menorah lights should perform no function other than to proclaim the miracle of a just and loving God. Every generation since Judah Maccabee has looked on these candles and recalled the sacrifices that are made for freedom. And in every generation, these lights have warmed the hearts of those not yet free.

Today, many Americans are sacrificing to bring freedom and hope to the oppressed. In this holiday season, we pray for the safety of our troops, for the success of the mission, and for their speedy return home.

And tonight we have asked the three eldest children of one of our Jewish chaplains, Army Chaplain Shmuel Felzenberg, now on duty

in Iraq, to do the honors of lighting the menorah. Will Menachem, Chaim, and Miriam Felzenberg are here to light the candles.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:30 p.m. in the Bookseller's Area in the East Wing at the White House.

Remarks on the Nomination of Samuel W. Bodman To Be Secretary of Energy

December 10, 2004

The President. Thank you. Good morning. Today I am announcing my nomination of Sam Bodman as Secretary of Energy. I am pleased to welcome Sam's wife, Diane, and all his family members—I emphasize “all”—for coming today. Welcome to the White House.

Sam Bodman is an experienced executive who has served in my administration as Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. During his varied and distinguished career in the private sector, Sam has been a professor at MIT, president of an investment firm, the chairman and CEO of an industrial company with operations worldwide. In academics, in business, and in Government, Sam Bodman has shown himself to be a problem-solver who knows how to set goals, and he knows how to reach them. He will bring to the Department of Energy a great talent for management and the precise thinking of an engineer. I thank him for agreeing to serve once again.

The Department of Energy has responsibilities that directly affect all Americans, from the security of nuclear facilities to reducing the risk of nuclear proliferation around the world to environmental cleanup to enhancing conservation and developing new sources of energy for the future. Every day, employees at the Department of Energy are working to protect the American people and to ensure that our country's homes and businesses have reliable, safe, and affordable supplies of energy.

During the last 4 years, the Department of Energy has been active and effective and has delivered important results for the American people. We've taken vital steps to up-

grade the Nation's energy infrastructure. We have begun an ambitious research program to develop a viable hydrogen-powered automobile. We have strengthened cooperation between the United States and foreign governments to safeguard nuclear materials and to fight proliferation.

For these achievements and more, the Nation is grateful to Secretary Spencer Abraham. As a United States Senator and a Cabinet Secretary, Spence has shown himself to be a man of integrity and wisdom. He's a good man, a superior public servant, and a friend, and I thank Spence for leading his Department so ably. And I wish him and Jane all the best.

During the next 4 years, we will continue to enhance our economic security and our national security through sound energy policy. We will pursue more energy close to home, in our own country and in our own hemisphere, so that we're less dependent on energy from unstable parts of the world. We will continue improving pipelines and gas terminals and powerlines, so that energy flow is reliable. We will develop and deploy the latest technology to provide a new generation of cleaner and more efficient energy sources. We will promote strong conservation measures.

In all these steps, we will bring greater certainty of costs and supply, and that certainty is essential to economic growth and job creation. And we will continue to work closely with Congress to produce comprehensive legislation that moves America toward greater energy independence. I'm optimistic about the task ahead, and I know Sam Bodman is the right man to lead this important and vital agency. So I urge the Senate to confirm his nomination without delay.

Congratulations, Sam.

[At this point, Secretary-Designate Bodman made brief remarks.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:44 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-Designate Bodman.